

## Strategies for Brain Injury

Brain injury can be a perplexing condition. The person may look and act much as before their injury but have difficulty in day-to-day activities that can seem “simple” to the person they’re talking with.

Family members and professionals can use these strategies to help the person with a brain injury that you’re communicating with. The person with a brain injury can also use the ideas listed to self-advocate for themselves with others, primarily once they identify the best strategies for themselves.

Challenge	What it Looks Like	Management Strategies
Information Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes longer to complete tasks</li> <li>• Takes longer to answer questions</li> <li>• Unable to keep track of lengthy conversations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make allowances and give the person extra time</li> <li>• Present only one thing at a time</li> <li>• Avoid interrupting or answering for the person</li> <li>• Verify that the person is keeping up with the conversation</li> </ul>
Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tires quickly (physically and mentally)</li> <li>• Becomes irritable</li> <li>• Exaggerates problems when tired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the person to take breaks</li> <li>• Schedule more demanding or essential tasks when the person is at their best</li> </ul>
Mental Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has difficulty following instructions</li> <li>• Loses track of what they are thinking or doing</li> <li>• Gets information confused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep activities short and uncomplicated</li> <li>• Ask specific and direct questions</li> <li>• Provide reminders of the next step or task</li> <li>• Repeat information as necessary</li> </ul>
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has difficulty learning new tasks</li> <li>• Forgetful</li> <li>• Loses things</li> <li>• Has difficulty recalling new information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the use of external memory aids (journals, calendars, timetables).</li> <li>• Maintain special places for belongings</li> <li>• Give reminders and prompts to assist recall</li> </ul>
Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appears not to listen</li> <li>• Misses details</li> <li>• Forgets what people said</li> <li>• Has difficulty concentrating</li> <li>• Unable to cope with more than one thing at a time</li> <li>• Is easily distracted</li> <li>• Changes the subject often</li> <li>• Gets bored easily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorten instructions and activities so they can be completed</li> <li>• Write down instructions accurately and in a way that can be easily understood later</li> <li>• Engage in only one activity at a time</li> <li>• Reduce external distractions</li> <li>• Bring the focus back to the current task</li> </ul>

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>What it Looks Like</b>	<b>Management Strategies</b>
Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has difficulty working out solutions</li> <li>• Unable to generate new ideas</li> <li>• Has disordered approach to problem solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help identify an achievable outcome for the task, ensure there is a purpose</li> <li>• Avoid giving open-ended tasks</li> <li>• Break down a task into smaller components</li> <li>• Reduce the demands made upon the person; one thing at a time</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has difficulty starting conversations</li> <li>• Has trouble understanding non-verbal communication/ body language</li> <li>• Has trouble understanding slang or common sayings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage participation by asking open-ended questions and statements such as “What do you think about that?”</li> <li>• Give verbal cues to communicate intent of conversation</li> <li>• Use simple and direct language and avoid talking in abstract terms or using sarcasm</li> </ul>
Planning and Organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has difficulty preparing for a task</li> <li>• Unable to work out the steps in a task</li> <li>• Has problems organizing thoughts and explaining things to others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a written guideline and outline the steps in order</li> <li>• Help develop a timetable (weekly or daily) to establish a routine of activities</li> <li>• Encourage taking time to think before they speak</li> </ul>
Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a rigid and concrete thinking style</li> <li>• Is resistant to change</li> <li>• Has simplistic understanding of emotions</li> <li>• Shows poor judgement and decision making skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain changes in routine in advance and give reasons</li> <li>• Avoid using emotional undertones</li> <li>• Provide real-life examples when offering explanations</li> </ul>
Self-Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows poor adherence to rules</li> <li>• Does not realize they have made errors</li> <li>• Dominates conversations, talk too much, and keep talking when others are no longer interested</li> <li>• Has low tolerance for frustrating situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback promptly and in a respectful maner when errors occur</li> <li>• Create and use signals to let them know they are talking too much</li> <li>• Encourage taking turns in conversations</li> <li>• Gently redirect behavior to a different topic or activity</li> </ul>

The Brain Injury Association of Virginia can help you better understand brain injury and consult with you about your personal situation. We can then direct you to services in your area you might need. Our services are confidential and free.

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